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Achitophel Befool'd :
A
SERMON
PREACHED
NOVEMBER V. 1678.
AT
S^c. SEPULCHRES.

By AARON BAKER, M. A. and late
of Wadham Colledge Oxon.



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To the REVEREND,

Dr. J. TILLOTSON,

Dean of Canterbury, and Chaplain in
Ordinary to his MAJESTY.

Reverend Sir,

THE Importunity of Friends could never have prevailed with me to let this Discourse come abroad, had not your better Judgment complied with their desires. This is enough to make it pass among those within; And as for those without, I must expect to become their Enemy because I tell them the Truth; and though I have endeavoured to rebuke them with a spirit of Meekness, I do not suppose they will receive it so. They have a way of answering us, by those Instruments of Cruelty that are in their habitations; so that we shall never reply more, unless by our blood, that cries for Vengeance. But the Will of God be done: If we must be sent as Sheep in the midst of Wolves, and that too by the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls,

Epistle Dedicatory.

Souls, *it behoves us all that are under-Shepherds, by Patience and Innocence to become Examples to the Flock. But I hope the Lord of David will snatch us out of the Jaws of these Lyons and Bears, and Experience works that Hope that he who hath deliver'd, will deliver us; and he hath deliver'd us out of six troubles and out of seven. But whatsoever becomes of such mean Lamps as my self, my hearty Prayer to God is, that such burning and shining Lights as You are in the Church, may never be put out by these Extinguishers, but continue to turn many unto Righteousness, till in God's good time you shall be translated to shine as Stars in the Firmament of Glory.* Sir, I earnestly recommend you, and all your Pious and learned Labours in the Vineyard, to the Blessings of him who is Lord of it, and am

From my Study this
16 Novemb. 1678.

Your most obliged and
humbly Devoted Servant,

Aaron Baker.

A

S E R M O N

Preached at

St. S E P U L C H R E S,
November V. 1678.

2 S A M. XV. 31.

And one told David, saying, Achitophel is among the Conspirators with Absalom; and David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the Counsel of Achitophel into foolishness.

NO Danger can appear more Dreadfull than that which is known to be plotted by Wickedness armed with Subtilty and Power; Such is that Danger which is in this place represented to *David*, being projected

Achitophel befool'd.

jected by *Achitophel*, that State *Machiavel* in *Israel* at that time. And this Danger must be the Subject of our present Discourse, now we are met upon occasion of Thanksgiving at this Anniversary Commemoration.

The words are a Part of that History which records *Abfaloms* Treason against the King his Father. I shall divide them into these two Generals:

First, A *Discovery of Danger* made to *David*.

Secondly, *David's* *Defensative* against this Danger.

Concerning the First, I shall enquire into three Things.

First, What the *Danger* was ?

Secondly, Who it is that is noted as a chief *Actor* or *Adviser* in this Conspiracy? *Achitophel*.

Thirdly, By whom this *Discovery* was made ?
And one told *David*.

The First General is an Advertisement given to *David*, or a Discovery of Danger, and therefore our first Enquiry must be, What kind of Danger it was.

This is easily collected from the Text, *Achitophel* among the *Conspirators*. So that the Danger was, a Conspiracy against *David* God's Anointed,
ted,

ted, such as we Commemorate this day. For the better understanding whereof, we must reflect on the former Passages of this History; where we shall find the Author of the Conspiracy to be *Absalom*, David's Son by *Maacha* the daughter of *Talmai* King of *Geshur*, a man of that goodly Personage and Endowments, that he was at once the Love and Beauty of *Israel*: a man of that exquisite Frame and Composure of Body, that from the sole of his Foot to the Crown of his Head, there was no blemish in him. 2 Sam. 3. 3. This *Absalom* not long since returned from Banishment after the Murther of his Brother *Annon*; and after some restraint in *Jerusalem*, reconciled to his Father by the means of *Joab*, who suborned the Woman of *Tekoah* to work on *David* by a Parable, is again received into Grace and Favour of his Compassionate and Royal Father. But Pride and Ambition not suffering his haughty Spirit to content it self with a moderate Prosperity, are restless within him, till they have wrought his aspiring Mind to aim and level at a Kingdom: Hence it is, that he runs into a desperate Rebellion; and that he might the more easily pluck the Crown from the Royal head of his Indulgent Father, he useth his utmost diligence to become

Popular,

Popular, and by his seeming Affability to win the Affections of the heedless Multitude. Ambition wants no Diligence. Whence *he riseth up early and standeth in the Gate*, where he complements all that pass by; And *when any man that had a Controversie came to the King for Judgment*, he would cast Aspersions on his Fathers Government, as, First, An Imputation of Remisseness and Negligence, *Thy matters are good and right, but the King deputes no man to hear Causes*. Secondly, An Imputation of Injustice, *Absalom* must be fain to do it, *David* would not. And Thirdly, An Imputation of Pride, too much Reservedness and Haughtiness. *David* belike kept too much State, while *Absalom* kissed those that came to him; but as *Judas's* Treason was breath'd forth in a Kiss, so this Popularity of *Absalom* was but the Veyl to his Unnatural Treachery. For the End of all his Kindness was, *Stealing away the Hearts of Israel* from the King, and the last and ultimate end of that, no less than Usurpation of the Crown; The Theft of hearts from their Natural and lawful Sovereign came all to this upshot, *Quis me constituet Judicem? O that I were made Judge in the Land!*

And now having gain'd (as he thought) the Peoples

Peoples hearts (whose simplicity is easily abused with the desire of Novelty and *fair speeches*) Rom. 16. 18. he puts on a Pretence of Religion (as the *Pharisees* did in this their matchless Conspiracy) and tells *David*, that he had a *Vow* to be paid at *Hebron*; but he had no sooner obtained leave *verse 7.* to go thither, but he *sent* Emiffaries (*secret spies*) *verse 9.* throughout all the Tribes of *Israel*, to feel the Inclinations of the People, and to draw a Party to meet him at *Hebron*; where having gathered his *Counsellors* and Abettors, he quickly made it *verse 10.* appear, that, That which drew him to *Hebron* was his Devotion to the Crown, not the Altar. *verse 12.* *Absalom* is proclaimed King, *Absalom* reigneth in *Hebron*.

News of this is soon brought to *David*, for, a *Messenger* comes and tells him, that *the hearts* *verse 13.* of the men of *Israel* are after *Absalom*; to which *David* hath nothing to say, but speaks to his servants, and those that were with him, to arise and *verse 14.* flee from *Jerusalem*. And now in his flight in great Distraction for fear of the Traitour his Son, as he was going up Mount *Olivet* with *verse 30.* his head cover'd (a token of Subjection, as some *willit*, p. 95. think) his feet bare and eyes weeping (Symbols of his Humiliation) behold another Messenger overtakes him, and tells him more particu-
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larly

larly of the Conspiracy and Conspirators. *One told David, saying, Achitophel is among the Conspirators with Absalom, &c.*

1 Sam. 26. 9. Here then we may behold the horridness of this Sin of Conspiring *against the Lords anointed*, and how Infamous Conspirators have been in all Ages. *Absalom's* Treason in this Story, written in the indelible Characters of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit of God, and there painted out in its proper colours to the life, with all his Art of Plotting and Contriving, has made him odious to all Posterity. How are his cunning Insinuations into the Peoples Affection, and his Affability and Popularity displayed? how his pretence of Piety and Religion? And this, partly to let us know, that the wicked and irreligious Hypocrites care not how they mock God, so they may abuse and mislead the People; and partly to acquaint us, that the Best, not only Kings, but Men, have not been able to secure themselves from the Traiterous Plots and underminings of the Wicked, who make no Conscience of paying Obedience to Gods Vicegerent. For was it not *David's* case, *a man after God's own heart*, more than once? Here *Absalom* the Son of his own bowels, and soon after *Sheba* the Son of *Bichri* blew the Trumpet;
What.

What Part have we in David? and who, as David himself said, was like to do him *more harm* 2 Sam. 20. 6. than did *Absalom*. This was St. Paul's Case too, Certain Jews, more than forty in the Conspiracy, Acts 23. 12, 13. bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor drink 'till they had killed Paul. And thus it was with our Saviour himself, for he had but twelve Disciples, and yet one of them a Traitor. No marvel then if Queen *Elizabeth* of ever fragrant memory, King *James* a pious and Protestant Prince, and as a seasonable and happy Discovery makes it even now appear, our present King *Charles* the Second, have found the same Lot in their and our Times from the hands of Bloody and murtherous *Papists*. Zeal of the Holy Cause, Extirpation of Hereticks, and the spreading of the Catholick Religion, were their Pretence in this, as well as in other their Plots and Conspiracies. Whence they are the worst sort of Politicians, never bogling at, nor making any Conscience of driving on their Projects and wicked Self-ends under the Vizard and Pretence of Religion. Thus it was, we see, with *Absalom* in my Text; when he intends to raise a Rebellious Army against *David* his Father, he pretends he must to *Hebron* to sacrifice, he hath a *Vow* to be performed to the Lord in

Mat. 2. 8.

Hebron. So *Herod*, when his Purpose was to kill *Christ*, pretends that he would go and worship the Babe that was born. And how did *Julian* cry up Piety and Reformation, when he had no other End, but sacrilegiously to take away the Revenues of the Church, that Christian Religion for want of maintenance for the Ministers of the Gospel, might insensibly decay and fall to the Ground? But let such wretched Politicians know, that as there is nothing more Odious to God, than to make Religion thus basely subservient to Policy; so they are the worst and most dangerous sort of Hypocrites, and cannot long escape the Wrath and fearful Vengeance of God, whose Religion they thus make a Mockery of, to serve their own most wicked Ends and Purposes. And so much may suffice to be spoken of the *first* Branch of our Enquiry into the Discovery, *namely*, What the Danger was? *A Conspiracy.*

Come we now to the *Second*, Who a chief Actor, Ring-leader or Adviser in this Conspiracy? and the Text tells us, It was *Achitophel*. *Achitophel with Absalom.*

Now this *Achitophel*, if we enquire into his Birth, was born in the City of *Giloh*, which *Joshua* numbers amongst the Cities of the Tribe

Josh. 15. 51.

Tribe of *Judah*. Whence in the 12th Verse of the same Chapter with my Text, we find him called, *Achitophel the Gilomite*.

For his Place and Relation to *David*; beside that of a Subject, which had been Obligation enough to have engag'd his Loyalty and Obedience, he was *David's* Counsellor, one that did partake of his Secrets, and with whom he did principally Advise about the Affairs of State. *Achitophel David's Counsellor*.

And lastly, for his Parts and Abilities, and his Estimation in giving Counsel, he was so Prudent and Wise, that it is said, that the Counsel of *Achitophel was as the Oracle of God*; 2 Sam. 16. ult.
Non ratione Rectitudinis Consilii, sed Adhesionis, Cajet. in loc.
saith *Cajetan*; such Estimation found it both with *David* and with *Absalom*. Hence it was, that *Absalom* had an Eye on him in the hatching of this Treason, and sent for *Achitophel* for the benefit of his Advice and prudent Conduct: So that well might *David* complain of the Greatness of his distress, in regard of the Persons by whom it was effected; *Absalom* his Son, and *Achitophel* his Counsellor; the one out of his own Loins, the other from his own Board and Council-Table. Who could have

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Achitophel befool'd.

have suspected or fear'd any such thing from these? and yet behold These are the Conspirators. *David* indeed resents it, and complains heavily of it, as a burden intolerable. If an *Enemy* had done this unto me, *I could have born it*; we can look for no less from an *Enemy*, who professes Hostility; but alas, saith *David*, *it was thou my Companion, and my Guide, my bosom Acquaintance, my Counsellor, and my familiar Friend; we took sweet counsel together, &c.* This was it that fate near unto the Royal Psalmist's heart, that the Treason was menag'd by so near an Instrument. There are no Wounds to the Wounds of a Friend. Even our Saviour *Christ* took it to his very heart, that he *was wounded in the house of his Friends.*

Psal. 55.

Zech. 13. 6.

And is the Treason of this day free from the like Guilt? May it not be justly tax'd with this very Circumstance? Was it not to have been Acted against the King by his own Subjects, Persons that had receiv'd many singular Favours from his happy Government and Royal Clemency towards them? Had they not a Propriety in their Estates, the Benefit and Security of the Laws? Yes certainly, they ate of the Fat of the Land, they fate *under their*

2 King 4. 25.

their own *Vine*, and under their own *Fig-tree*, without the least disturbance of a *Sequestration* or an *Inquisition* as to their Superstitious and Idolatrous Religion. *Achitophel* is among the Conspirators with *Absalom* in the Text; and Subjects in the Conspiracy of the Day.

Achitophel was of *David's* Privy-Council, a great Statesman, and a cunning Politician, and therefore a very dangerous and remarkable Conspirator. The greatest Wits prove most Pernicious, when they are misemployed. Who so wise as *Achitophel*? When he was *David's* Counsellor, the Oracle of God; what a Stay, what a Prop, what a Pillar and Support to a Church or State? But now, who more formidable to *David*? How is *David* startled to hear, that *Achitophel* is among the Conspirators?

Wise Politicians if wicked, are of all others most Destructive. So was *Catiline* among the *Romans*, a great Wit, but a most pernicious Rebel; And so the *Gracchi* in the same State, wise and eloquent, but to the publick detriment

It was the Case of these *Popish* Traitors, many of them of good Birth and great Parts; but how did they cast away their Abilities?
God.

God bestowed them on them, but they employed them in the Devil's Service. But O that we could learn, that when God gives us Parts, as Learning and Wisdom, to employ them to his Glory, and the Churches good.

Jer. 4. 22.

Take heed of being *Achitophels*, *wise to do Evil, but not to do Good*. Our good Parts, if abused, will one day turn to our greater Condemnation; and Knowledge misemployed will

Luk. 12. 47.

but encrease our *Stripes*. And let us beware likewise of sinning against the Laws of Gratitude and near Relations; for we may be assured, that God's Justice looks upon and will severely punish the unnaturalness of our sins, as when Sons Rebel against their Father, or Subjects against their Prince, thereby subverting the Laws of Nature it self.

Ch. 16. ver. 17.

Mark those that cause Divisions amongst you, and avoid them, was St. Paul's Advice to the *Romans*. As we must shun Faction and Rebellion, so must we avoid all Occasions conducing thereunto, and especially *mark those that cause them*, that are Chief Actors and Ring-leaders in them. For as *Achitophel* is here observed above others, so in all Seditions the Leaders and Counsellors are most Notorious, the People but Followers seduced and misled.

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In the 2^d Sam. 20. 1. *Sheba blew the Trumpet,* and in the 2^d Verse it follows, *Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the Son of Bichri.* And so here in my Text, *Achitophel plotted, the rest went out in their simplicity, and knew not any thing of Absalom's or Achitophel's Intent, though at last they were easily won upon and drawn into the Conspiracy.* Verse 11.

Which that we may Parallel in the *Powder-Treason*: Were not some *Papists* singled out to be the Actors, as *Fawks* and *Catesby*? While the rest had design'd their time to come in and do their Parts, if God's Mercy had not prevented their Designs, and seasonably interpos'd it self in the Defeating of their Counsels. What the Prophet *Isaiah* said once of the sinful *Jews*, may be fitly applyed to them, *Their works are works of Iniquity, and the Act of Violence is in their hands; their Feet ran to evil, and they made haste to shed Innocent blood; and therefore their Webs shall not become Garments; their hopes ended in disappointment, for their Plot was discover'd, and they taken in the crafty Wily-ness that they had Imagined.* Chap. 59. v. 6, 7. Which brings me to Psal. 10. 2.

The third particular Enquiry, By whom

the Discovery is made. *And one told David.*

The Vulgar renders it, *Et nunciatum est David*; In the *Hebrew* Elliptically, *Et David indicavit*, i. e. *indicavit quissiam*, as *Montanus*, or *quidam*; No name, an *Individuum vagum*. It doth not appear, that he was any employed by *David*; but rather one that came Casually or Providentially, by Gods own Dispensation and peculiar Mission; one not thought on, or put upon any such Employment: to Teach us; that God doth many times bring to light Conspiracies against Kings and States by strange and wonderful Means. As he hath professed himself to be the Protector of his Anointed, and his Church, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the One*, nor the *Sons of Violence* approach to hurt the other; so he hath appeared Marvellous in the detection and manifestation of the Practises of the Wicked, though never so secret and close. I cannot instange in a plainer Case, nor indeed in any more pertinent to our purpose, than that which is the Occasion of this days Thanksgiving. For certainly none can doubt, but that the hand of God was in the Discovery, while the Treason was brought to light by a *Quidam*, a Letter from an unknown Person, which

Mat. 16. 18.

Psal. 89. 23.

which the King by God's direction construed aright, and so fore-seeing the danger, prevented the fatal stroke.

How then should this deter men from Conspiring against *the Lords Anointed*, since God is so engag'd in the defence of their Persons, that rather than they should perish by the Plots and Conspiracies of the Wicked, he will bring to pass strange Discoveries, though even by the expence of Extraordinary and Miraculous means. In the Scripture we are forbidden to *speake evil of Dignities*: But how little Jude v. 8. this Prohibition is regarded by us of this Nation, I leave you to judge, who cannot but be sensible surely of the frequency of Whispersings against God's Vicegerent; of the Number of seditious Pamphlets and scandalous Libels, that have of late years stollen out into Print, to rob our Governours Ecclesiastical and Civil of their Reputation, some murmuring, others mutining against their Rulers, detracting from the worth of their Good deeds, and amplifying and aggravating their Bad, that so by traducing their Government, they may the sooner ripen the People for a Rebellion against the first Opportunity. But, this Practice is no less sinful than common, for

Exod. 22.28.

'tis a notorious thwarting the Commands of Scripture; *Thou shalt not revile the Gods* (saith Moses) *nor curse the Ruler of my People.* We may not Whisper or speak evil, much less Plot and Conspire the Death of our Sovereign the *Lords Anointed.* I shall conclude this Particular with that of the Royal Preacher:

Ecclef. 10.31.

Curse not the King, no not in thy Bed-chamber, nor in thy Thoughts, for (it shall not be conceal'd) a Bird of the Air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the Matter. God will have it discovered by some Means or other. I have done with the *first* General proposed, *A Discovery of the Danger* toward David, in the first words of my Text. *And one told David, saying, Achitophel is among the Conspirators with Absalom.*

I proceed now to the *Second* General, *David's Defensative* against the Danger discover'd in the next words: *And David said, O Lord, I pray thee turn the Counsel of Achitophel into Foolishness.*

And herein three Things also present themselves to our Consideration.

First, The Person to whom *David* seeks and applies himself, which is *God*; and *David* said, *O Lord.*

Secondly,

Secondly, The Means which *David* useth in his Search or Address to the Lord, *Prayer.*

O Lord, *I pray thee.*

Thirdly, The Summe and Tenour of *David's* Prayer, *O Lord, I pray thee, turn the Counsel of Achitophel into Foolishness.*

I begin with the First of these: The *Person* to whom *David* doth seek and apply himself, The *Lord*; And *David* said, *O Lord.*

David who was called, *A man after God's own heart*, had that Eulogy and Commenda- I Sam. 13. 14. tion (as some think) for his Mercifulness. He was φιλόπρωτος (saith *Procopius*) a Lover of the Poor, a compassionate man. But others are Willit, p. 48. of opinion, that *David* was called so for his Faithful Dependance upon God in all Dangers, which did either threaten or affright him. He had a faithful heart, a heart that was Constant and True to his God. How often doth he profess it? as *Psal. 57. O Lord my heart is fixed;* Verse 7. *my heart is fixed.* And again, *Psal. 108. O God* Verse 2. *my heart is fixed.* His heart was such as would never start or recoil from God, no not in the greatest Fears and Concussions whatsoever. Even in this great Danger he keeps close to his God. The Reason that *Cajetan* Cajet. in 1 Sam. p. 97. gives, doth indeed vary in words, but is to the

the self same Effect and Purpose. 'When David (saith he) is said to be a man after God's own heart, God who calls him so, saith, I have sought a man after mine own heart; Whence Cajetan, *Quæsitus erat David, ideòque ad similitudinem querentis: David was sought by God, and therefore was a man like God. As he was, quæsitus à Deo; so was he, vir quærens Deum.* So that he that seeks God in his Distress, is a man after God's own heart. This was this Pious King's Practice in all Difficulties, in all approaches of Trouble and Affliction; I sought the Lord, and he delivered me. I sought him in the day of my Trouble, yea I sought him in the Night, when my Sore ran; *Plagâ fluente, & non quiescente*; when my Wound bled, and my Pain was upon me: and that in the Night, the most dismal and disconsolate Condition; even Then I sought him. It is the same Lord, whom he seeks in this Place, and to whom he doth apply himself in the great danger that was Imminent at that Time. One tells David of a Treason and Conspiracy against him. David runs immediately to God, and said, O Lord.

Too many among us swerve from this Example of David, as,

First,

First, Those who in their Afflictions and Necessities look not up to God, but cast their Eyes only on Inferior and Second Causes.

Those are they of which the Apostle Peter speaks, *short-sighted, purblind men, men of thick eyes,* that can see only such Objects as are at hand, such as are the objects of their Senses.

2 Pet. 1. 9.
μωωραδωτες.

It was God's complaint of *Ephraim* and *Judah*,

Hosea 5.

That they could see no further than their neighbour Nations, their Friends and Allyes for help. *They saw their wound,* but they went not to God; no, they went to the *Assyrian,* and sent to *King Jareb,* who (as the Prophet tells us) could not heal, nor cure their wound. They

Verse 13.

could discern nothing but the Arm of Flesh, which was visible to their fleshly Eyes; they had not the Eye of Faith which sees afar off, even the things which are not seen. Or

2 Cor. 4. ult.

Secondly, Such as see no help at all, but are cast down in damps of Dejection and Despair, like the *Philistins* in 1 Sam. who cryed out, *Woe unto us, who shall help us?* they are even at their wits end. Or,

Chap. 4. v. 8.

Psal. 107. 27.

Thirdly, If they do see afar off, they look the wrong way. Instead of looking up to God with *David,* whose eyes were lifted up unto

Psal. 121. Ps.

the Hills, they look down to the smoaky Gates
of

1 Sam. 28. 7.

of Hell, as Saul did to the *Witch* of *Endor*. Desperate Sinners will look after any Shifts, rather than they will turn to God. But *David* here knew well, that when a Danger is threatned from a Malicious Enemy, such as *Achitophel* was, in whom Policy and Power were both combin'd, none is able to defeat such an Adversary but God himself, to whom he makes his Address.

2 Chron. 20.

Verse 13.

And it would be happy for us, if we would follow his Example, and in all our Extremities fly unto our good God for Relief and Succour. We are all even at this time again, in a Panick Fear, because of the Treachery of the *Papists*; A second *Powder-plot* was to have been acted amongst us, the very Consideration whereof has put us into such a General Consternation and Astonishment, that we are in *Jehoshaphat* and *Judah's* Condition, *We know not what to doe*; The Counsel that I shall advise you to, is the course that they took in the words Immediately following, *Our eyes are upon thee*. Lift up your Eyes and your Hearts unto the Lord, and trust in the Name of God, and then no doubt, but he will some way or other rid you of your Enemies, and bring you out of your Distress, or else

else (if a tryal of your Constancy and Christian Courage be most for his Glory) support you under it. For, Surely, *the Name of God is* Prov. 18. 10. *a strong Tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe.* Let us not stand Amazed, or in suspence what to doe, in a Fluctuation and doubtfull dispute with our selves; No, let us first humble our selves for our sins, and then run and betake our selves with speed to this Tower, leaving the Issue to God and his Anointed, the King and Parliament, while we use the Means which *David* did in the Conspiracy of the Text, and that is, *Prayer*, Our next Particular, and now comes to be insisted on. *And David said, O Lord, I pray thee.*

As Protection and Deliverance from Dangers are works of God's Providence, so Prayer is a means subservient to this Providence. Prayer is a Condition without which there is no one thing we have Promise to receive from God. *Ask and ye shall have*, not otherwise. Mat. 7. 7. And for this cause *David* no sooner hears of *Achitophel* in the Conspiracy, a Combination of such strong and Malitious Politicians, but he falls immediately to Prayer. *Lord, I pray thee.*

It was *David's* Practice here and elsewhere, Psal. 109. 4.

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and

and it must be ours, if we would be deliver'd as *David* was. *God is a Present help in the day of Trouble*, and 'tis our Duty to Pray to him for his Assistance.

First, *God's Command* requires it, when we are engaged in the greatest Difficulties.

Call upon me in the day of Trouble.

Secondly, *God's Promise* is obliged, and annexed to our Prayers. *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in Trouble, and will deliver him.*

Much here might be added concerning the Duty, Power and Efficacy of Prayer, as that, it is as *Incense* to the Nostrils of the Almighty; A *Sacrifice* wherewith he is well-pleas'd. Of that force, that it ^a opens and shuts Heaven; has Command over the Sun ^b and Moon, to make them stand still at Noon-day; allayes the fury of the ^c Fire, and the raging of the ^d Sea; Cures the ^e Body of Diseases, and the ^f Soul of Sin: In a word, that conquers ^g Death, and the ^h Devil, and in a manner (if I may speak it with Modesty) even ⁱ God himself. *Let me alone*, saith he to *Moses*; as if he could not do what he was about, untill *Moses* ceas'd Praying. But this is a trite Subject, we meet with it often, and therefore I pursue it not at present,

^{Psal.} 141. 2.

^a Jam. 5. 17, 18.

^b Josh. 10. 12.

^c Numb. 11. 2.

^d Exod. 14. 15.

^e Acts 28. 8.

^f Job 42. 8, 10.

^g 1 Kings 17.

20, 21, 22.

^h Mat. 17. 21.

ⁱ Exod. 32. 10.

present, but proceed from the Means, *Prayer*, to the *Form* or Tenor of this Prayer, or (if you will) to the *Object* of it, the thing which *David* prays for, which is next in order, and craves your Patience yet a little longer; O Lord, I pray thee, *turn the Counsel of Achitophel into foolishness.*

The same God who makes Wise the Godly, doth infatuate the Wicked. *Thou, O Lord,* Psal. 119. 92. (saith *David*) *hast made me wiser than mine Enemies.* That *David* was wise, yea wiser than his *Enemies*, he acknowledges to be God's doing, *Thou through thy Commandments*, through the Light of thy Word hast done it. On the other side, it is Gods work too to infatuate and befool the Ungodly, such as conspire against his Church and Anointed; As *Absalom* and *Achitophel* did in this Scripture, and as the *Popish* Traitors, whose Wickedness we commemorate this day, with that Mark of Shame, and brand of Infamy which is due unto them.

The summe of *David's* Prayer is here in the *Hebrew* נִסְלֵנוּ, which word imports a *be-fooling*, an *infatuating*, a bereaving of Understanding and Judgment, or as 'tis in our *English* Translation, a *turning into Foolishness.*

Job 12. 17. God is that God of whom *Job* saith, he makes the Judges Fools, and leads away the Counsellors spoyled; so we render it. In the *Latine* it is, adducit Consiliarios in stultum finem, makes Judges Fools, and brings Counsellors to a foolish end. The word חיל is spoyled not only of Goods, but of Reason and Understanding. Thus it is translated *Psal.* 76. The stout-hearted are spoyled or robbed, which must not be understood so much of Goods, as of Reason and Judgment, of Courage and Animosity; So here the Counsellors spoyled, is as much as to say, they are befooled. He is that God that, as *Isaiab* speaks, destroyeth the Counsels of *Egypt*, that challengeth all the Policy of men, and bids defiance to it. Where are thy wise men? saith he to *Pharaoh*; Who makes the Counsellors of *Pharaoh* brutish, and the Princes of *Zoan* Fools. Lastly, he, that God, that maketh Diviners mad, turneth Wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; and to whom the Wisdom of the World is Foolishness. This was the summ of *David's* Prayer against that Wicked and Unnatural Conspiracy which at that Time was on foot against him. Lord, turn the Counsel of *Achitophel* into Foolishness. A short Ejaculation, the words few, but so Powerful and Effectu-

Verse 5.

Isa. 19. 3.

Verses 11, 12.

Isa. 44. 25.

1 Cor. 3. 19.

Effectu-

Effectual with God, that by them was overthrown all the Policy of *Achitophel* and his Complotters risen up in Rebellion against God's Anointed.

I shall shut up all in a brief Application, wherein (because I would not be too forward in speaking to this present Plot 'till it be fully discovered, which we should all wish and earnestly pray to God for) give me leave to draw before you a Parallel between the Defeating of *Achitophel's* Treason of old, and those *Po-pish* Traitors in King *James's* days, our Deliverance from whom we Commemorate yearly this day.

And first, This may acquaint us with the variety of God's Methods, and the many ways he hath to defeat and disappoint the Wicked, who like *Gebal* and *Ammon* and *Analek* knot themselves together against his Church and Anointed, as those *Papists* did about Seventy three years since, and do now again at this Time. Who Wiser than *Achitophel*, whose Counsel for Authority (you heard) was held as the Oracle of God? Yet let all the *Achitophels*, *Machiavels*, *Judasses* and *Julians* of the World, let them all, I say, combine, and joyn in weaving the most subtle and Artificial

ficial Web of Treason, God is able to unravel it, and take it afunder thred by thred, that every Eye may look through the Folly of their Ungodly Designs.

I cannot tell you all the Means that God hath to *turn the Counsel of Traitors into Foolishness*, for who can set bounds to the Infinite and Incomprehensible Wisdom of God? Let it suffice, that I point to some few notable ways, observable by us, by which God hath, and doth still *turn the Counsel of Wicked Rebels* (such as rose up against *David* at this Time) *into Foolishness*.

The Means especially are Five.

First, God turns their *Counsel into Foolishness*, by Countermining and opposing their Counsels by *weak and Improbable Means*. So he countermin'd *Achitophel* by *Hushai*, a man not of that deep reach or Excellency that *Achitophel* was, a man that had not that Estimation or Opinion; yet his Counsel must be inclin'd unto, and *Achitophel's* rejected. How could *Achitophel* but think himself befooted and befooled, scorned and neglected, when the Counsel of an Upstart and Novice is preferr'd before his? In the like manner, God befooled *Pharaoh* and his Host by *Unlikely Means*;

Against

Against all his *Horses and Chariots* he sent Armies of *Frogs and Flies*. So all the Policy of the *Gentiles* in upholding their Idol-Gods, all their Learning and Wisdom he silenced and confounded by the *Foolishness of Preaching*, as God is pleased to call it. And so in this *Powder-plot*, A *small unlikely Means*, the sending of an obscure Letter, which was hard to be construed, befool'd all their Wisdom. Traitors in all Ages have been betrayed by their own Folly. That's the first way how God turns the *Counsels of Achitophel into Foolishness*, by Weak and Unlikely Means.

Exod. 8. 2, 21.

I Cor. 1. 21.

Job 5. 13.

Chap. 20. 42.

Secondly, By taking them in their own Craftiness. God makes the Policy of all Wicked *Machiavels* a Snare to entangle their own Nets. In the First of *Kings*, we read of *Benhadad* King of *Syria*, that he came up against *Samaria* and besieged it; but God, who called him, *Vir retis mei*, made him fall a Prey into the hands of *Israel*. So was it with *Achitophel*; he that would have taken his Sovereign, was himself taken in his own Halter; The common End of all Traitors, their own Policies trip up their own heels.

A third way, How God turns the Counsel of the Wicked into Foolishness, is by Dividing them

2 Kings 7 8.

Gen. 11.

them in their own *Aims* and *Designs*, by raising *Jealousies* among themselves, and melting their hearts into Panick Fears and Terrors. This was the Course God took to discomfit the host of the Syrians; *The Lord made them to hear a Noise of Chariots, and a Noise of Horses, even the Noise of a great Host, wherefore they arose and fled for their Life*, when there was no Danger near. And thus dealt he with the Builders of *Babel*; they agreed all to work Confusion, 'till at last they were so *confounded*, that they could not understand any more one anothers *Language*. This was the Case of those *Popish* Conspirators; what Disputes were there? What difference among themselves how to dispose of the Kings Children, after the King himself was blown up? and how to share such and such Lands? It is usual with Traitors as with Thieves; their particular Interest sets them together by the Ears, and *turns their Counsel into Foolishness*.

A *fourth* way is Cutting them off by *Death* in the works of their own *Designs*, while their Plot is but on the Anvile, and hammering; The Lot of *Antiochus, Herod, Julian*, and many others; and the same that befell those *Popish* Traitors, who were opportunely

cut

cut off by the hands of Justice. Traitors walk always, as though they trod the Scaffold; The Axe of God's Justice is evermore turn'd upon them, and they are still menaced with Destruction.

A *fifth* and last way (for I will instance in no more) is *surprizing* them in their greatest *Security*; and disappointing them of their hopes, even Then, when they are ready to grasp them. The rich *Miser* in the Gospel had Corn, Wine and Oyl, had all in his *Barns* and Store-houses for many years; but is deceived, he cannot enjoy them *one Night*. How was he befool'd? how were his *Counsels* and Expectations *turn'd into Foolishness*? Even so was it with those *Romish* Traitors, they had a *Hellish Birth*, but it prov'd Abortive for want of *strength to bring forth*? All the Plot suited Like 12. 20. to their Desires; The Vault was hired, the Gunpowder laid, the Barrels and Engines of Death hid and disguised, the Train laid, Match ready, and all this Undiscover'd: Isa. 37. 3. How near were they now! how near the end of their *Hellish Designs*! one spark of Fire had done all; and how soon is that struck! Yet now behold, God, the Keeper of our *Israel* (who all this while overlook'd

all their Actions, and heard their guilty Whispers) disappoints and befools them. Traitors seldom fare better; when they are, as they imagine, nearest to their Ends, God wrests the Booty from them, and sets them further off than ever from their Purposes. While they go on in their Plots and Counsels and serious Projections, That God who is called by the Prophet *Amos*, *Deus subridens vastitatem*, (so in the *Latine* with much Allowance from the *Hebrew*) sports and laughs at them, bringing Destruction upon their Counsels, which Infatuates and turns them into Foolishness.

Amos 5. 9.

And now after all this on God's Part, there remains certainly something to be done on Ours.

Secondly therefore, Let the Consideration hereof invite us to the Exercise of a double Duty, *Thankfulness* and *Prayer*.

As to the *First* of these, *David* tells us, That it is a good thing to give Thanks unto the Lord, and to praise his Holy Name, to shew forth his Loving kindness in the Morning, and his Faithfulness every Night. 'Tis a Duty wherein we resemble the blessed Angels of Heaven, and which we must never forget on Earth; Gods Mercies

Psal. 92. 1, 2.

are

are Renewed to us every Morning, and every moment gives us some Evidence of his Love to us. He cloaths, he feeds us, and preserves us from Innumerable Dangers; and therefore 'tis but Reason, as for him to expect, so for us to pay him the Tribute of our Thanks, and that daily and hourly. But these are Private Thanksgivings; there are Blessings that concern the Publick, as the Peace, Plenty and Safety of the Nation wherein we live, and these we must thank God for in our Publick Capacities; But especially we should take Notice of Gods Signal Deliverances either from his greater Judgments, or the Enemies of our Church and State; The latter of These concerns us more Peculiarly at present, and which I am briefly to exhort you to, as it relates to the Discovery of the *Powder-plot*. And here to raise your Gratitude, I shall desire you to reflect and consider a little, Who were designed to Destruction in this Plot, and what the sad Consequences of it would have been, had it taken effect; The latter of these we can but guess at; the former is most certain, that it was design'd against King and Parliament, which

(you know) is made up of the Honourable Nobility and Reverend Bishops, of our faithful Counsellors and grave Judges; in a word, of the greatest part of the worthy Knights and Gentlemen of our Land. All these must have been dispatched as in the twinkling of an eye, and at one mighty Thunder-clap been sent to Heaven together; where though they should have been happy to Eternal Ages, we should for a while have been left behind to bewail the wretched Condition of this our helpless Land, and mournfully to weep forth the sad Elegies of *Sion*; for a while, I say, for though *Pœna Damni*, our Punishment in the Loss of our Pious King and Parliament might not presently have broken our hearts, yet *Pœna Sensûs*, the *Inquisition* would, unless we would submit to the Yoak of *Popery*, and to save our Bodies for a moment, have damn'd our Souls for ever. All this I ground upon this easie Supposition, that had this Plot of theirs met with its hop'd Success, they would have Introduc'd the Establishment of *Popery*, and probably back'd the Observance of it with an *Inquisition*. And then what good Christian could have expected, but to feel the

the Tortures of the Rack or Gibbet? and to hear of many doleful Outcries, many Shrieks and Groans, and other sad Notes from the distressed Protestants? And is not this, O ye men and Brethren, matter of a Thanksgiving to us, that God deliver'd us from this Plot, and snatch'd us as *Firebrands out of the Fire?* Amos 4. 11. Is it not worthy of our Everlasting Remembrance, that he suffered us not to become their Prey, nor to be cloathed with Shame and Dishonour? Certainly, if this be not, 'tis not easie to name a Temporal Deliverance that is. For alas, who are we? and what is there in us, that God should signalize this Nation with such a Complicated Mercy? We are a very sinful and Rebellious People, and therefore might justly fear, that God should rather give us up into the hands of our Enemies, than deliver us from them. We have deserv'd his Anger, and must therefore confess, that *it is of the Lords Mercies that we are not Consumed, because his Compassions fail not.* Lam. 3. 22. God hath hitherto preserved us, and would fain preserve us still, if we would pay him Obedience, and answer his Mercies with fit returns of Gratitude. Then might other Na-
-tions

tions dash one against another, and the World tumble upon heaps ; whatever Confusion there is in other Kingdoms, whatever Plots and Conspiracies against This; of us God would take a Peculiar Care and Charge. Which that he may doe, let us add to our Thankfulness for the Time past, our Prayers for the time to come.

First, That he would be pleased to make us more Thankful for all his great and undeserved Mercies, Private and Publick, Temporal and Spiritual, especially for this Signal Preservation from *Popery*, and for this great Deliverance of *King and Parliament*.

Secondly, That he would continue still to turn the *Counsels of Achitophel into Foolishness*, and discover more and more the Plots and Designs of the Enemies of his Church, and our Peace; That he would lay open more and more their fraudulent and wicked Purposes (especially the *Papists and Jesuits* at this Time) to render them as Odious to men, as they are to God.

Thirdly and lastly, That he would continue and perpetuate his Mercy in Preserving our Gracious Sovereign, that now is, with this

Pro-

Protestant Church and Common-wealth, from
all Treasons and Traiterous Conspiracies :

*Which God grant to us of this Kingdom, for
his Son Christ Jesus's sake, To whom with
the Father and the Holy Spirit be ascribed
by us (as is most due) all Honour, Glory,
Power, Might, Majesty, Wisdom and
Thanksgiving, henceforward, and for ever=
more. Amen.*

FINIS.





